

This submittal advocates maintaining a minimal requirement for Morse code proficiency at the highest license class level.

Arguments have been put forward that it is illogical to test for a specific mode of operation. Morse code is a unique mode in that it uses skills that are not part of everyday communication. All other modes utilize speech, reading, or typing (alone or in combination) as a means of communication. Thus, Morse code (CW) deserves to be treated separately.

Amateur radio proficiency is a combination of art, skill, and knowledge regarding technical requirements, regulatory issues, and operational protocols.

Proficiency in Morse code is still relevant to the changing technology of amateur radio today. Various digital modes are proliferating, but Morse code is also a digital mode. The key difference is that decoding of Morse code requires human intervention as opposed to relying on a computer program. Programs cannot interpolate errors and fail when transmission problems occur. On the other hand, the human decoding of Morse code allows a level of communication when all else fails.

For the above reasons, Morse code deserves to be preserved, if only at a minimal level, to provide a skill and knowledge basis for worst-case emergency communications. There have been many natural disasters, which have occurred this year. These have pointed out the fragility of commercial communications infrastructures and have emphasized the key role that amateur radio, and its inherent flexibility, plays in disaster communications.

Higher amateur radio license classes are characterized by demonstration of higher levels of proficiency in the broad spectrum of amateur radio skills. I advocate maintaining a five word per minute code test as part of the examination for Amateur Extra Class.